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The Horror! The Horror? The Appropriation, and Reclamation, of Native American Mythology

Joe Nazare

In any culture, myth, legend and folklore serve to explain the unexplainable, to promote cultural continuity and survival, and also to entertain.

Lester A. Standiford sketches this blueprint in the opening of his essay, "Worlds Made of Dawn: Characteristic Image and Incident in Native American Imaginative Literature" (168). Certainly Standiford points out the key functions of a mythology for its own parent culture, but what happens when one culture's mythology is appropriated by another culture? Increasingly over the past two decades, the popular horror genre, whose literary and cinematic narratives are scripted primarily by whites, has found its subject matter in the darker elements of Native American mythology. Various explanations might be offered for such repeated invocation of a Native American element. Philosophically, the "natural supernaturalism" of Native American spiritualism seems to accord well with the Romanticism of the horror genre which allows for the infusion/intrusion of the unworldly into the realm of everyday existence. Less positively, the Native American might be seen as just another variable to be plugged into horror's xenophobic formula: establishing a monstrous Other which must be vanquished to preserve cultural order.¹ The modern horror genre might simply follow the pattern of American popular literature, culminating a history of demonization of the "Indian" extending back through the sensationalist dime novels of the late Nineteenth Century which "fed the public taste with increasingly violent images of the Indian as thoughtless savage killer and destroyer of civilized institutions" (Ruppert 389), all the way back to the Puritan captivity narratives which fashioned Indian captors as "ravenous beasts" comprising a "company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, insulting" (Rowlandson 70).

With its functional dependency on notions of monstrosity, villainy, and violence, the horror genre can hardly be expected to conform to the strictures of political correctness; still, the cultural work of the typical horror narrative's treatment of the Native American should not be glossed over. Historically the

rise of the horror narrative in America intertwines with the narrative of Native American dispossession. In a founding text of American Gothic, Charles Brockden Brown's 1799 novel *Edgar Huntly*, blame—and punishment—for the novel's various transgressions is ultimately heaped on warmongering Indian "savages." Brown himself in his preface "To the Public" argues for a distinctly American brand of horror that casts aside European hallmarks—"Puerile superstition and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras" (3)—in favor of more indigenous subject matter: "The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the western wilderness, are far more suitable, and for a native of America to overlook these, would admit of no apology" (3). Devoid of any irony, Brown enacts here an initial appropriation of the very concept of "native American," a maneuver perhaps emblematic of Brown's own denial in the novel of any linguistic ability in his Indian characters. As Leslie Fiedler notes of Brown's rhetorical strategies: "For the corrupt Inquisitor and the lustful nobleman [of European Gothic], he has substituted the Indian, who broods over the perils of Brown's fictional world in an absolute dumbness that intensifies his terror. Brown's aboriginal shadows do not even speak. They merely threaten by their very presence" (159-60).²

In retrospect, the disavowal of Native American language and literary tradition, the positing of the Native American as brooding bogeyman and howling, inarticulate fiend of the wilderness clearly served as a pretext and justification for cultural domination. My interest here, though, does not lie with the colonial project (and rhetorical rationalization) of Indian removal that informs the long first wave of the figuring of the Native American within American Gothic. I invoke such first-wave writers like Brown and Bradford (or later, Hawthorne and Blackwood) only to establish the tradition, the touchstone against which subsequent horror narratives are to be rubbed. Rather the focus is on what I would like to call the more modern second and third waves, on the complexities of the manipulation of "Indian" materials in late Twentieth Century Gothic narratives by white and Native American writers alike.³

By "second wave," I refer to the aforementioned proliferation of Native American subject matter within the popular horror narratives of the past two decades. Such a phenomenon might at first seem to reflect the development of America's own attitudes at the close of the Twentieth Century: a movement away from the historical silencing of the linguistic abilities and cultural resonances of Native Americans, a belated acknowledgment that Native Americans do possess their own culture, their own cosmology and mythology. Before long, however, it is quite apparent that the presence of Native American mythology within modern horror narratives often speaks to something more nefarious than an enlightened regard for another culture. The appropriation of the darker elements of Native American mythology for horrific effect might ultimately reveal a tidal attraction toward the first wave, as these sec-

ond wave (re: white) writers retroactively associate the Native American with an untenable state of savage primitivism.⁴ The dubious cultural work performed by these horror narratives, though, has not gone unchallenged. Indeed, a third wave might be traced to those Native American writers who themselves choose to script Gothic narratives from their own unique perspective (as opposed to merely being the object—and the abject—of the white horror writer's perspective). This third wave might be identified as an attempted reclamation of Native American mythology from its often disparaging use by the second wave (here "reclamation" implies not only the seizing back of native materials but their restoration towards more productive ends). As one attends to the intercourse of the second and third waves, the role of Native American mythology in the horror genre obviously complicates the Lester A. Standiford blueprint that myth merely serves "to promote cultural continuity and survival" and "to entertain." By juxtaposing horror's handling of the mythology with native writers' employment of tribal myths, the following essay hopes to chart not only the cultural repercussions of such cooptation by the horror genre, but the effect on the Native American literary project of emergence.⁵

What follows below, then, is a series of comparative readings. First, I counterpose Louise Erdrich's 1988 novel *Tracks* (which I will be upholding throughout this essay as a paradigmatic emergent text of Native American literature) to two second-wave horror narratives, Muriel Gray's *The Trickster* (1995) and Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* (1983). Such juxtaposition helps to delineate the appropriation and reclamation of leading native myths of the trickster and the wendigo, but deeper issues are also broached (e.g. the issue of cultural property, the museum-like display of Native American materials reflexively performed by both Gray's characters and *The Trickster* itself). The linking of Gothic rhetoric with land disputes in both *Tracks* and *Pet Sematary* also demonstrates that the struggle for narrative control over Native American mythology maps onto issues of *geographic* possession.⁶

Yet even as the adopting/adapting of a Gothic rhetoric by a Native American writer like Louise Erdrich (or Leslie Marmon Silko) proves quite instructive, one must admit that such emergent writers can be located only on the fringe of the horror genre proper. Thus my second set of comparative readings involves two Native American texts more deeply immersed in the third wave: Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996) and Owl Goingback's *Crota* (1996). Again, though, matters are not so simple as a growth from silence to speech: these third wave writers do not merely offset the ventriloquism of white horror writers (in the latter's mythological appropriations) by lending an authentic Native American voice to the horror genre. Close reading and the consideration of subtext forces one to question whether such third wave horror novels ultimately cut against the grain of emergence; Goingback's *Crota* in particular—despite being laureled with a Bram Stoker award for

Best First Novel—hardly proves the crowning achievement of Native American Gothic.

Next I turn from such shortcomings to a text whose strategic use of Native American mythology helps render it an exemplum of the emergent horror novel, S.P. Somtow's *Moon Dance* (the fact that such a novel is written by an Asian American signals the work left to be done by Native American writers of horror). Somtow's addition of Asian-American subject matter to his Native American material to form a critique of comparative racism counterbalances the narrative strategies of a second wave writer like Jack Cady in the novella *By Reason of Darkness*. My point, though, is not to lose the particularity of my Native American theme by eliding it with an Asian-American one: I want to focus on how Cady returns with a crucial difference (demonstrating distinct fears of the dominant culture) to the theme of the native burial ground and the issue of territorial encroachment/displacement first developed in King's *Pet Sematary*. Finally, by returning once more to Erdrich's *Tracks* and contrasting it with Cady's novella, I hope to point towards future possibilities for the Native American/third wave horror novel.

One prominent trend over the past two decades has found various traditions of ethnic literature making strategic use of the mythological trickster figure: Asian-American (Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* [1989]); African-American (Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* [1981]); Chicano (Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* [1987]). Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* is a Native American novel similarly infused with a "trickster aesthetic" (Smith 11).⁷ Nanapush, co-narrator of *Tracks*, embodies characteristics of the trickster figure: a "smooth-tongued artificer" (Erdrich 196) who can "wound with pointed jokes" (17). With his ability to "comically unite opposites and upend categories and conventions" (Smith 8), Nanapush cunningly undermines the Christian rhetoric of his rival Pauline. Asked if she has given up "the fruit without price," Pauline preaches: "You mean Christ. He dwells within us. He is the fruit of the virgin's womb" (Erdrich 144). To which Nanapush lewdly responds: "Not that fruit. The cherry." Likewise, when Pauline proudly recites that she will not live "by bread alone," Nanapush answers her metaphoric language with reductive literalism: "There's meat...good stew!" (199). Nanapush also displays an ability to put the sacred instruments of the church to profane use, stealing the wire from the church piano to make snares. Akin to the Chippewa trickster Naanabozho, "Nanapush adopts the techniques of the oppressor to even the score and to balance the distribution of power" (Peterson 990). In *Tracks*, his mastery of the white man's language enables him to slyly negotiate cross-cultural boundaries, as when he seizes upon his position as a government interpreter to warn Rift-In-A-Cloud not to sign the Beauchamp Treaty. Well aware of the deceptive yet authoritative quality of government documents and treaties, Nanapush also utilizes the technology of writing to forge granddaughter

Lulu's birth certificate and rescue her from boarding school. No doubt Nanapush's relationship to Lulu is central to *Tracks*, as Nanapush uses his storytelling ability as a trickster to narrate to Lulu her familial and cultural history and to point out a communitarian moral: "We must live close together, as one people, share what we have in common, take what we're owed" (180). Ultimately, then, Erdrich's trickster aesthetic proves integral to the emergent aspect of her novel. While the novel dramatizes cultural damage, "reconstructing the evil blows" (113) inflicted by dominant white culture, *Tracks* does not reduce itself to a bitter lament. Rather Erdrich demonstrates through Nanapush that humor and craftiness can be vital skills for "the personal and cultural survival of the Chippewa people" (Smith 72).

Erdrich's narrative project of revisionist mythmaking and particular usage of the trickster in *Tracks*, though, faces its own stunning transformation when this mythological figure is appropriated by the horror genre. In *The Trickster*, Scottish writer Muriel Gray points out the contradictory elements of the trickster myth:

Creator and destroyer. It could be both. There were many Tricksters, apparently. Some were figures of fun, who could be deceived in a hilarious fashion as well as deceive, providing endless stories of great ribaldry, almost always involving sex and defecation. Others were figures of the deepest terror, demons who destroyed and murdered as naturally as a mortal breathes in and out, clever, shapeshifting, vengeful, evil beyond imagination. (87)

The protocol of the horror novel naturally leads Gray to focus on the second type of trickster, but the darkening of Erdrich's trickster aesthetic is nevertheless remarkable. Gray turns the trickster back against native culture as an agent of genocide: her eponymous monster is not a positive model for cultural survival like Nanapush but an "Indian-hating killer" (99) who preys on the Canadian descendants of the Kinchuinick tribe that had defeated and imprisoned him. Whereas Nanapush's profanations were marked by a keen sense of wit, Gray's trickster wallows in mere vulgarity, manifesting himself "in so many foul guises, so many obscene tableaux" (262). Nanapush's carnivalesque inversions devolve into physical mutilation in *The Trickster*: each victim has his "heart stuffed up his anus, the penis in the mouth" (98). By situating her Trickster as menacing Other, Gray also strips him of any verbal acuity or storytelling ability: generally his dialogue consists of the mundane command to have his four demonic names spoken. Overall, then, Gray's novel might be seen to enact its own trickster-like deception on its audience. Gray's characters are certainly politically correct in their challenge of racist stereotypes of the Indian as drunk, wife-beater, and superstitious fool. The novel's protagonist also learns to take pride in his repressed Indian heritage:

finally recognizing that “he was no savage among civilized white folks” (428), Sam Hunting Wolf accepts his shaman powers and vanquishes the trickster. These seemingly positive messages, though, mask the fact that Gray has taken a mythological figure used constructively by countless ethnic writers (and who now even has its own unit—“Native American Trickster Tales”—in the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*) and served it up to the popular imagination as a vile fiend to be removed from the cultural order.

Another aspect of Gray’s *The Trickster* proves equally disconcerting. The review blurbs prefacing the novel tout Gray’s work as reminiscent of Stephen King, and one of the characters in the novel actually invokes King’s name when describing a grisly murder scene (90). By novel’s end, however, the extent of King’s influence becomes quite apparent. When Sam confronts the Trickster in his subterranean lair, finding his truest incarnation to be a giant, insect-like monster, the scene unfolds as a virtual re-write of the finale of King’s own 1986 opus, *It*. That Gray’s Trickster traces his heritage to King’s shape-shifting *It* is also evident in the way both antagonists draw their evil power from the malice lurking in the hearts of the respective townspeople. All this leads one to question the importance of native mythology to Gray’s text and to wonder if she has merely cloaked a familiar horror plot with Indian exotica. *The Trickster* is well-stocked with medicine men, sweat lodges, sacred charms, ancient curses, and dream visions, supporting the claim of Native American writer and critic Paula Gunn Allen that white culture seeks “to be titillated by Indian lore, seeing—however unconsciously—native spiritual life as a curious artifact” (385-6). Appropriately enough, Sam’s white wife in *The Trickster* works in a museum, and her endeavors seem to mirror Gray’s own catalogue and display of native materials: “Kate knew the whole floor should have been [devoted to] railroad history, but she had all these great Indian domestic tools and artifacts to do with tribal worship and mythology to show and nowhere else to show them” (67).

Despite its particular echoes of *It*, Gray’s *The Trickster* might have found a model of second-wave appropriation of native myth in another King novel, *Pet Sematary*. As was the case with Gray’s novel, a consideration of King’s own source texts can be quite revealing. *Pet Sematary*, which deals with a father’s desperate, tragic attempt to resurrect his infant son by placing him in an ancient Indian burial ground, can be tracked along three lines of influence. The first, which King cites in an epigraph, is W.W. Jacobs’ short story, “The Monkey’s Paw.” Like King, Jacobs revolves his plot around a be-careful-what-you-wish-for motif, as a grieving parent’s effort to call a child back from the dead leads to some unholy consequences. The second line of influence includes those tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne set in the dark forests of New England. King scholar Anthony Magistrale has done the most to link *Pet Sematary* with Hawthorne’s moral allegories: “The woods of Hawthorne and King are a reflection of the self’s essential darkness and the human affinity to

sin" (59).⁸ Even as he cites these woods as representational arenas for the unconscious self (60), though, Magistrale fails to elaborate on the space occupied in such arenas by Native Americans. Repeatedly Hawthorne's characters map their own hysteria onto the Native American, attributing a sinister presence to these figures which are generally absent from the stories. For instance, Young Goodman Brown frets that "there might be a devilish Indian behind every tree" (Hawthorne 66), and the title character of "Endicott and the Red Cross" warns his brethren that "the savage lieth in wait for us in the dismal shadow of the woods" (116). King seems to follow Hawthorne's lead in *Pet Sematary*: there is not a single Native American character in the novel, yet the white characters fear that their woods are haunted by a mythic Wendigo whose touch will turn them into cannibalistic savages.

This leads to the third influence on King's text, the 1910 supernatural novella, *The Wendigo*, by the Englishman Algernon Blackwood. One might argue that Blackwood's tale of an ill-fated moose hunting trip in the eery Canadian backwoods influenced King's own sylvan setting and provided King with the details of Wendigo lore. In the context of this essay's discussion, though, Blackwood's characterization of the hunting party's Indian cook proves particularly noteworthy. The very harshness of the cook's name—Punk—suggests where he ranks in relation to his white masters. Yet what is even more telling is the way Blackwood's rhetoric slyly equates Punk with the fiendish Wendigo. The Wendigo is distinguished by its stench, "Pungent and acrid like the odour of lions" (190), just as Blackwood is careful to point out the "odorous" (163) nature of Punk's sleeping blankets. Similarly, the Wendigo is called a "shadow of unknown horror" (172), but only after Punk himself has been seen slipping about camp "like a shadow" (164). Finally, the Wendigo is associated with the cold wind and the ability to cover great distances in a short amount of time, and at the end of the tale, Blackwood writes of Punk's long journey home: "He covered the entire journey of three days as only Indian blood could have covered it. The terror of a whole race drove him" (207). The terror of a whole race, though, seems to belong more to Blackwood, whose subtly-demonizing rhetoric transforms the Wendigo from a native myth into a descriptive template for the Indian savage.

The Wendigo/Windigo also figures into the opening pages of Erdrich's *Tracks*. As Nanapush and Edgar Pukwan attend to the corpses of a consumption plague, Pukwan worries that "the unburied Pillager spirits might seize him by the throat and turn him windigo" (3). Still, Nanapush refuses to be spooked: "They say the unrest and curse of trouble that struck our people in the years that followed was the work of dissatisfied spirits. I know what's fact, and have never been afraid of talking. Our trouble came from living, from liquor and the dollar bill" (4). Soon thereafter, Nanapush refers to the conditions of sickness, freezing, and starvation which probably form the root of the Wendigo myth: "Days passed, weeks, and we didn't leave the house for fear

we'd crack our cold and fragile bodies. We had gone half windigo. I learned later that this was common, that there were many people who died in this manner, of the invisible sickness" (6). All this is not to suggest that Nanapush is a staunch rationalist whose narrative discounts the supernatural. After all, even as he downplays the windigo, Nanapush recounts the miracle of the Pillager shack which impossibly refuses to catch fire. Rather the emphasis is on the way the supernatural is taken in stride by characters like Nanapush, as opposed to the way a novel like *Pet Semetary* magnifies the Wendigo into the ultimate horror. Critic Wendy K. Kolmar has provided perhaps the most lucid explanation of Erdrich's handling of her material in *Tracks*: "The supernatural elements exist undifferentiated from the 'present,' the 'real,' the 'natural.'" Characters and readers do not confront them as *other*; they are simply part of the experience and life of the text" (238).

King and Erdrich's contrasting stances on the supernatural thus prove quite instructive. For the protagonist of *Pet Semetary*, who happens to be a doctor, the Wendigo represents not just a physical threat but a threat to his rationality: "*And it isn't just grief [the Wendigo] feeds on. Sanity. It's eaten your sanity*" (358). In contrast to emergent novels like Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me Ultima* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, in which native healers are shown to succeed where Western medicine fails, *Pet Semetary*'s white doctor says that "the medicine available at the Micmac burying ground was perhaps not such good medicine" (139). It is not only notions of rationality which are challenged, however, but the Christian faith as well. Earlier the link between King's novel and Hawthorne's moral allegories was noted, and in *Pet Semetary* one can detect a Hawthornian influence on the allegorical names King gives his characters. The family cat, which returns Wendigo-haunted after being buried not in the eponymous pet cemetery but in the adjacent Micmac burying ground, is nicknamed "Church." Even more interesting is the name of King's protagonist: Dr. Louis Creed. Despite Creed's proclamations that he is merely a lapsed Methodist who has had no deep religious training, his name carries intimations of Christianity's Apostle's Creed and the dictates of that prayer to "believe in one God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth." Dr. Creed, then, is deeply invested in Western monological authority and proves the perfect antagonist to Native American culture.

Not surprisingly, Erdrich assumes the inverse position in *Tracks*, offering Chippewa myth and spirituality as a positive alternative to Western conceptions of reality and religion. The alternating narratives of Nanapush and Pauline are structured to call Pauline's reliability into question, as the reader is more willing to side with Nanapush's worldview (and not merely because of his parodying of Pauline's religious faith). In Erdrich's narrative, the efficacy of native "magic" is borne out by the fact that various characters witness its tangible results. Bernadette Morissey sees her daughter Sophie's torn and

bloody dress after Moses Pillager's love medicine has triggered Sophie's deflowering by Eli. Also, a whole host of characters witness Sophie's hypnotic trance outside Fleur's door when the latter seeks a jealous lover's vengeance. During the same scene, however, Pauline is the sole witness of the alleged Christian miracle of the Virgin Mary's statue crying quartz tears, which leads one to suspect that Pauline is deluded. Erdrich's subsequent detailing of Pauline's martyr complex, such as the scene where Pauline thrusts her arms into a pot of boiling water, also renders Christian fanaticism much more terrifying than any Chippewa element in the novel. Erdrich might also be seen to turn the tables on Christianity through the subtle demonization of Father Damien, whose name echoes the satanic child of the 1976 horror film, *The Omen*. Finally in contradistinction to *Pet Semetary*, the only potential decide involves the nun Pauline's attack on the lake spirit Misshepeshu, a crusade which Pauline believes opens the door for white lumber interests to level the Matchimanito woods.

Discussion thus far has situated *Pet Semetary* and *Tracks* as polar opposites, but their commonalities might prove even more interesting than their differences. Lurking beneath the supernatural machinery of both novels is a protracted battle over property rights. As Nancy J. Peterson notes (986-7, 992), the historical backdrop to Erdrich's novel is found in the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and the forced transition to a system of private property which actually served to strip Native Americans of their property (e.g., when they could not afford the property taxes or were conned into selling out to white settlers). In *Tracks*, Erdrich recounts the unscrupulous yet "wholesale purchase of [Chippewa] allotment land by whites" (98), dramatizing how the claim of the native's religious primitivism was used to justify the encroachment of white civilization. When Pauline adopts her colonialist mentality, she becomes a perfect representative for white culture's efforts to clear a space for itself in the (Native) American wilderness: "I should not turn my back on the Indians. I should go out among them, be still, and listen. There was a devil in the land, a shadow in the water [Misshepeshu], an apparition that filled their sight. There was no room for [God] to dwell in so much as a crevice of their minds" (137).

Early in *Pet Semetary*, one similarly learns that the remnants of the Micmac tribe are engaged in a legal battle with the U.S. Government concerning rightful ownership of the woods in Ludlow, Maine (where Louis Creed has just purchased a house). Comparable to the situation in *Tracks* (but, significantly, lacking Erdrich's critical perspective), King's novel offers a white program of demonization which can serve to nullify Indian land claims. Louis Creed's neighbor Jud "had talked about how the Micmac Indians had staved off a British landing at Machias two hundred years ago. In those days the Micmacs had been pretty fearless, he said, and then added that he guessed there were a few state and federal lawyers who thought they still were" (100).

Again, one sees how Native Americans are rendered a present absence in *Pet Sematary* (cf. Hawthorne), lurking menacingly offstage. King gives voice to only one fake Indian in the novel, Dr. Creed's dead white patient, Victor Pascow. When Pascow posthumously haunts Creed and warns him that any attempt to cross the boundary into Micmac territory will lead to dire consequences, the ghost exudes a particular threat: "The blood had dried on his face in maroon stripes like Indian warpaint" (67).⁹ King leaves the land dispute unresolved in his novel, but a victory for dominant white culture is hardly unfathomable. One can envision the government usurping the Micmac land not under the pretense of a Christian uplifting but with the old justification that it is merely retaliating to Native American hostility (just as the hostility of the Wendigo seems to have destroyed Creed's respectable white family by novel's end—but only after Creed himself encroached upon the Micmac burying ground).¹⁰ Recognizing the land struggles which take place in a novel like *Pet Sematary*, one sees once more how the modern horror genre aligns with a centuries-old tradition of American popular literature. As Neal Salisbury, editor of the 1997 edition of Mary Rowlandson's *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, notes: "The genre of the captivity narrative...juxtaposes Euro-American suffering to Native American aggression, subtly inverting the process of dispossession of natives by colonists that was in effect the context for most narratives" (55) in the first place.

The fact that both *Tracks* and *Pet Sematary* revolve around property issues seems no less coincidental when one turns to the scholarship of Walter Benn Michaels. In his essay, "Romance and Real Estate," Michaels establishes the historical context for a central novel in the American Gothic tradition, Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. Michaels refers to the Salem witch trial presided over by Nathaniel's ancestor, John Hathorne, during which Rebecca Nurse is accused and later hanged because the old-time villagers desire her family's plot of land. Hawthorne weaves such schemes of (alleged) demonic possession and geographical dispossession into his novel, as Matthew Maule is executed for witchcraft by the covetous Colonel Pyncheon, "who asserted plausible claims to the proprietorship of this...land on the strength of a land grant from the legislature" (qtd. in Michaels 91). Michaels further links this dynamic to the modern horror genre when he notes that the movie *Poltergeist* "centers on what is in effect a title dispute between a real estate development company and the corpses who inhabit the bull-dozed cemetery the developers build on" (90). Building upon Michaels' work, Carol J. Clover in turn remarks that the ghouls who surface at the end of *poltergeist* look very much like Indians, which leads Clover to declare that "even haunted house horror devolves finally, on the Indian question" (134).¹¹ In her feminist/psychoanalytical study of horror cinema titled *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, Clover identifies modern horror with the settler-versus-Indian stories of 1930's and 40's westerns. There, too, one finds "the traditional

story of an Indian atrocity repaid with genocide and a land grab” (163), an attempt to justify American history by attributing “to the Indians characteristics so vile and deeds so heinous that the white man’s crimes pale in comparison” (134).¹² So while the Native American has long since been dispossessed of his land, and the cultural effects of demonization have been realized, these recurring pop culture narratives continue to perform an important function. The struggle by which present, living owners fend off dead, former owners is not only a leitmotif of the horror genre but, according to Clover, a chance for white America to wrestle with (exercise/exorcize?) its own demons of guilt: “We fall back on the terms of the older, originary story that haunts our national consciousness” (163).

The horror genre’s capacity to perpetuate cultural damage—seizing upon and redeveloping the narrative property of native mythology in order to rationalize the great American “land grab”—leads one to expect the genre to be challenged as part of the project of emergent literatures. A writer like Louise Erdrich seems to do just that, reclaiming Native American myths while herself appropriating horror conceits for her own purposes. Her poem “The Windigo” (from the collection *Jacklight*) compares with the narrative strategies of *Tracks*; Erdrich allows the poem’s titular demon to articulate *his own* story in his own quiet tone, whereas the Wendigo of Algernon Blackwood and Stephen King are little more than gibbering, howling fiends.¹³ Erdrich’s poem empowers rather than demonizes Native Americans, showing them quite capable of dealing with the wintry creature. Another instructive (prose-)poem by Erdrich is “Potchikoo’s Life After Death,” which reworks the hoary conceit of the evil doppelganger. Potchikoo has a “mean twin,” but this ghoul’s actions allow a sardonic social commentary from Erdrich rather than merely serving to terrify: “[Potchikoo’s mean twin] got drunk and tossed a pool cue out of the window of the Stumble Inn. The pool cue hit the tribal chairman on the shoulder and caused a bruise....And then [the twin] knocked down the one road sign the government had seen fit to place on the reservation” (56).

Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977) is another central text of Native American emergent literature that pairs with Erdrich’s *Tracks* in making strategic use of the supernatural to deliver its message. Commenting on the truly horrific nature of World War II—“the dismembered corpses and the atomic heat-flash outlines, where human bodies had evaporated”—Silko notes that “not even oldtime witches killed like that” (37). Silko also taps into a Dantean underworld iconography when protagonist Tayo journeys to the blighted town of Gallup, located between a polluted river and a garbage dump and littered with the passed-out bodies of drunken Indians. Silko’s most important riff on the supernatural, though, occurs when the medicine Betonie teaches Tayo that “it was Indian witchery that made white people in the first place” (132). In the mythic poem that forms the central section of the novel, Betonie

describes a witches' conference which ran out of control and "set in motion" (135) the destructive actions of the white man. Here Silko's goal is not to demonize white culture or blame the Native American for his own oppression (just as the latter might be expected of a second wave horror narrative). Instead, Silko labors to show that *both* the white man and the Indian have been manipulated by this ancient witchery, which has deceptively pitted the races against one another. Combating horror becomes a matter not of beating down and casting out the racial Other, but a matter of adopting an integrated, communal perspective. Overcoming witchery ultimately proves analogous to a project of emergence: "The liars had fooled everyone, white people and Indians alike; as long as people believed the lies, they would never be able to see what had been done to them or what they were doing to each other" (191).

In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noel Carroll notes that "Just as Karl Marx called capitalists vampires and werewolves, utilizing horror iconography for progressive purposes, so the creators of horror fiction can apply the imagery of fear and disgust against the forces of political or social repression" (198).¹⁴ But while writers like Erdrich and Silko do just this in their employment of Gothic imagery and rhetoric, they can hardly be classified as "creators of horror fiction." The attempt to locate the emergent *horror* novel (as opposed to emergent novels which draw obliquely on the genre) leads one to consider two potential third wave horror narratives by Native Americans: Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* and Owl Goingback's *Crota*. Discounting the fact that *Indian Killer* is marketed on bookstore shelves as mainstream fiction, one might recognize that Alexie situates his novel firmly within the "slasher" or serial killer subgenre of horror: white men are being scalped and mutilated in modern-day Seattle. There is a striking open-endedness, though, to Alexie's narrative; by never truly revealing the identity of the murderer (seemingly a disgruntled Native American), Alexie avoids the conservative paradigm by which a monstrous Other is punished for his transgressions. Alexie offsets the grisly murders against the historical horrors perpetrated against Native Americans, and the very title of his novel suggests a certain ambiguity, a certain bipolarity. As one Alexie character grouches (offering a twist on the "title disputes" in *Poltergeist* discussed by Michaels), "[C]alling him the Indian Killer doesn't make any sense, does it? If it was an Indian doing the killing, then wouldn't he be called the Killer Indian? I mean, Custer was an Indian Killer, not a Killer Indian" (247). Alexie also achieves a Todorovian hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations for the murders: the killer might not be an unbalanced Native American adopted and raised by a white family (and ironically burdened with the colonialist name "John Smith") but a mythic figure leading a new Ghost Dance, fulfilling an "apocalyptic prophecy" (185). One white character scoffs at the terror which has seized Seattle—"In the third act, they'll find some white guy in eagle feathers is doing the killing. White guys are always the serial killers" (339)—but Alexie leaves

open the possibility that Native Americans are at last exacting retribution for *white* misdeeds.

Even as Alexie's novel revolves around the mystery and horror of the Indian Killer, it also proves emergent in its systematic correction of Native American stereotypes. When the scalping of the white victims leads many to the presumption that the killer must be Indian, Alexie's Native American protagonist Marie Polatkin points out that "the French were the first to scalp people in this country. Indians just copied them" (57). The Limbaugh-like radio personality feeds Seattle's frenzy over of the Indian Killer by ranting that tribal casinos are turning Washington state "into a nest of sin and debauchery" (17), but a visit to an actual casino by one character exposes such propaganda: "David had expected to find something more illicit and foreign inside....David had assumed the casino would be filled with drunken Indian men, half-naked Indian women, and Italian mobsters" (106). Suspected killer John Smith likewise has his eyes opened when his odyssey leads him among Seattle's homeless: "Before he'd met them, John had shared the common assumption that all homeless Indians were drunks. But he soon discovered that many of them didn't drink....He was saddened that so many Indians were homeless and had no simple reason to offer for their condition" (144). Finally, Marie Polatkin (who insists that the killer is not an "Indian man" [248] and herself emerges as a suspect) also challenges stock conceptions of race/gender through her activism: "I'm not some demure little Indian woman healer talking spider this, spider that, am I? I'm not babbling about the four directions. Or the two-legged, four-legged, and winged. I'm talking like a twentieth-century Indian woman" (247).

Marie finds her forum in a university class on Native American literature; she feels it her duty "to let the other students know the real story" (329). Her professor, Dr. Clarence Mather (whose surname implicates him in colonialist history), is challenged for gathering a syllabus of Native American texts (e.g. *Black Elk Speaks*) either co-written or edited by whites. Marie takes particular issue with the inclusion of Jack Wilson (not an actual author but a fictional character in Alexie's novel) on the syllabus. Wilson, a white man with spurious claims to Indian bloodlines, is an ex-cop turned writer of murder mysteries featuring/exploiting a Native American protagonist: "Aristotle Little Hawk, the very last Shilshomish Indian, who was a practicing medicine man and private detective in Seattle" (162). Marie complains that Wilson's books "are killing Indian books" (68) and that books like Wilson's actually commit violence against Indians" (264). Here Alexie's novel takes a metafictional turn: when the Indian killer makes headlines in Seattle, Wilson promptly plans a novel based on the events, called *Indian Killer*. Wilson's agent spurs him on with sugar-plum visions of bestsellerdom: "Indians are big right now....Publishers are looking for the shaman thing, you know?...And you've got all that, plus a murder mystery. That's perfect" (162-3). "This belongs to

you, Wilson" (339), the agent says of the Indian Killer story, but Alexie's novel naturally calls all such claims into question. Dr. Mather enacts his own appropriation of Native American narrative when he aims to publish a discovered box of recordings of traditional Indian stories, despite being rebuked by Marie's brother Reggie: "That's a family story. It belongs to the family. Not on some tape. It's not supposed to be told this way" (137). Alexie is well-aware of the tradition he is working in—he does not fail to include a subplot (ur-plot?) concerning a property dispute between a white family and a Spokane tribe—but he is careful to show that "ownership" is a literary as well as a geographical issue. One should not reduce Marie Polatkin to a mere mouthpiece for Alexie, but her picket signs at a Jack Wilson book-signing speak volumes: "ONLY INDIANS SHOULD TELL INDIAN STORIES" (263).

Choctaw-Cherokee Indian Owl Goingback is one such native storyteller, but his Stoker Award-winning first novel *Crota* is *not* the exemplum of the emergent Native American horror novel it might first appear to be. I do not mean to question Goingback's award or posit the Horror Writers of America as some conspiratorial guild which tokenly accepted Goingback; *Crota*'s sociopolitical subtext, though, emits a conservatism which renders the novel a perhaps polar opposite to Alexie's *Indian Killer*. On the surface, *Crota* performs all the correct maneuvers. Goingback displays a command of his native material (e.g. the Yuwipi ceremony [200]), an authentic, insider's view lacking, by contrast, in Muriel Gray's appropriation of the Native American as cultural artifact in *The Trickster*. Likewise, Goingback's characters correct misconceptions that the Native American had no written language or form of government (286-7) prior to the arrival of the white man. The dual protagonists Jay Little Hawk and Skip Harding also point toward a communal moral (cf. Silko) by bonding together via a native ritual: "Their blood mingled—blood of a red man, blood of a white man—and joined together, became one. Brothers. The way it should be. The way it should always have been" (295). Skip also learns to accept his *own* Native American blood (passed on from his grandmother) and to embrace Native American spirituality in order to kill the Crota, a bloodthirsty beast surviving from the age of the dinosaurs. Finally, Goingback's happy ending—the medicine man Strong Eagle shows his gratitude towards the Crota-killing Skip by healing his son's deafness/muteness—again validates native culture in lieu of the inefficacy of the white man's science.

It is in the very vanquishing of the Crota, however, that the "victory" of the Native American proves problematical. Actually, the Crota is defeated twice in the novel, and the first Pyrrhic victory parallels and elucidates the second. Goingback blends American history with native myth (but with different results than Alexie in *Indian Killer*), as Jay Little Hawk recounts the story of Tecumsah's brother Tenskwatawa, the Shawnee prophet who encour-

aged his people to renounce the white man's culture and "to return to traditional ways" (153). When the Creek Indian tribe refuses to join the Shawnee resistance movement, Tenskwatawa promises to destroy the Creek villages via earthquake, but his supernatural powers ultimately serve to awake the Crota from its subterranean hibernation. Still, Goingback's "Godzilla" motif of the accidental release of an ancient monster is less interesting than the way Goingback's rhetoric seemingly transforms the Crota into the symbolic double and agent of white America. Only moments after Little Hawk recalls how white expansionism displaced the Native American and forced him westward, the Creek villagers are said to have been chased continuously westward by the predatorial Crota: "[T]he Crota, angered at being awakened from its sleep, followed and found them again" (155). Also, just as the white man's land grab is figured by Little Hawk as having pushed Indians' "backs up against the Mississippi River" (153), the persecuted Creeks are subsequently shown with their backs literally up against a wall. After the brave, self-sacrificing Creek warriors lure the Crota into an ancient underground labyrinth ("No sooner had the first warrior fallen than a second appeared to challenge the monster"), the Creek medicine men and tribal elders wall up the exit behind the Crota and then magically seal the exit by committing "suicide before the great wall. They died so their tribe would live" (156).

The heroic tones which Little Hawk brings to this story, though, cannot gloss over the dispossession and decimation of the Creek tribe. Nor can one fail to note how the Crota has brought the promise of Tenskwatawa's activism—"the complete recovery of all Indian land" (154)—to a dark, ironic, fruition. A similar dynamic can be traced after Little Hawk and Skip Harding finally succeed in killing the Crota (stressing the parallelism, the Crota had been released from his Creek-created prison by another earthquake). In the wake of the Crota's defeat, Little Hawk renounces both his property and his profession as game warden of Hobbs County, Missouri, to return to an Oklahoma reservation—a curious send-off into the sunset by Goingback, in light of the forced migration and inevitable internment of the Native American enacted by the Crota/U.S. Government two centuries earlier. Sheriff Skip Harding also feels a need to abandon his hometown now that Logan, Missouri promises to turn into a tourist trap: "With the discovery of the lost city [an ancient civilization located in the underground labyrinth] it [Logan] would probably boom into a first-rate city—a city packed with cheap hotels, bargain stores, tourists, and crime" (318). Not only is there no suggestion of any Native American property rights to the discovered city; in an ironic twist, the decadence about to be visited upon Logan hearkens back to the cultural contamination by white America which the prophet Tenskwatawa had sought to prevent in the first place. There is thus inscribed in *Crota* a subtle futility, whereby Native American resistance proves a *self-defeating* prophecy. The military defeat at Tippecanoe, the massacre at Wounded Knee: these perhaps

form the subtext, the suggested end results of Native American activism in the conservative *Crota*, where Tenskwatawa's arousal of the Crota signals the punishment the unruly Indian brings crashing down upon his own head. So while the review blurb cut-and-pasted from the Fort Lauderdale *Sun-Sentinel* proclaims that in *Crota* Goingback "turns an Indian myth into a monster of a tale," the true "monster" of the tale is the subjugation of the Native American to white dominance, is the ignominious American history which the modern-day horror novel *Crota* only seems to recapitulate.¹⁵

Ultimately, though, one must wonder whether the self-defeating prophecy of *Crota* proves much different from the "apocalyptic prophesy" comprising the incendiary ending of Alexie's *Indian Killer*, where Marie Polatkin warns her white inquisitors: "Indians are [ghost] dancing now, and I don't think they are going to stop" (418). While Alexie's aforementioned open-ended narrative avoids a subversion-and-containment paradigm by never revealing the identity/ethnicity of the Indian Killer, there is still the foreboding of a vicious cycle of violent retribution, the portent of a bloody future that seemingly matches American history (an oppressed Native American culture driven to revolt; a conceivable militant intervention against the latest Ghost Dance by dominant white culture). As these third wave novels by Goingback and Alexie themselves come dangerously close to repeating history rather than growing and learning from it, their sense of emergence is perhaps qualified. Ironically, one might have to turn to an Asian-American writer to locate the exemplum of the emergent horror novel. S.P. Somtow's *Moon Dance* not only reclaims Native American mythology and culture from its historical treatment in American Gothic but offers a historiography which points to a spark of hope amidst the ashes of apocalyptic destruction.

In *Moon Dance* Somtow cleverly intertwines the supernatural horror of lycanthropy with the historical nightmare of America's treatment of its minority peoples. The novel's central "plot" details a group of Eastern European aristocrats/werewolves (led by Count von Bachl-Wolfing) seeking to establish a "lycanthropic utopia" (159) on the American frontier of the 1880's: "A new land. Unspoiled by civilization. Freedom at last. We shall roam where we will....And natives to feed on, natives unacquainted with the folklore and superstition that causes the peasants of Europe to hide behind the silver and their wolfsbane" (157-8). Somtow, though, yokes such schemes of European expansion onto the narrative of *American* colonization of the West, particularly the laying of the railroad. The entrepreneurial Count carries out his scheme by investing heavily in the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad, which he aims to divert from populated gold-rush areas into remote woodlands where the werewolves can den. As the plot unfolds, and the wolf-town of Winter Eyes is established, the werewolves' hunting is identified, from a Native American perspective, with the running of the railroad: "And from a distance came a new kind of howling—cold, anguished, almost

like the screech of the iron horse as it clattered across the dead buffalo plains” (243). Indeed, the Native American counterpoint to colonialist schemes proves crucial to Somtow’s narrative strategies, as the Count’s wolfpack is forced to recognize that America is not a blank text but a palimpsest. The “land is taken” (164): a secret tribe of Lakota Sioux—the *Shungmanitu* or werewolf tribe—are already lodged in the Black Hills where the European wolves seek to hunt (thus representing a powerful cultural entity and not just a primitive food source for the European wolves). “Can you make a land virgin by killing off its aborigines?” (40), a sarcastic D.H. Lawrence once asked in *Studies in Classic American Literature*. To secure their utopia in the New World, the Count and his wolves will have to do just that, implicating themselves in America’s bloody history of Indian removal: “We are just going to have to dispose of the others. We will have to mark the territory ourselves” (164).

The Count’s desire to “mark the territory” suggests not only an aggressive debasement (demarcation-through-urination) but a marking of a literary landscape that simultaneously writes off or erases the Native American from the national narrative of manifest destiny (gestures, we have seen, not foreign to American Gothic). In almost any other modern horror novel, a tribe of cannibalistic werewolf-Indians would no doubt be ideal candidates for demonization, but *Moon Dance* casts a positive light on the *Shungmanitu* by offsetting them against the Count’s more savage pack. If anything, the actions of these shapeshifting Indians are more holistic than horrific:

Among the *Indiens peaux-rouges*...these werewolves are not considered creatures of Satan, but have their own part to play in the great cycle of being. Some of the Sioux believe there is an entire tribe of werewolves to the north of us, and that they prey on slain warriors and old people who have outlived their usefulness, absorbing their essence unto themselves. (148)

Such *Shungmanitu* efforts to promote tribal continuity also contrast with the more ruthless predations of the American military, as Somtow sets the violent territory dispute between the *Shungmanitu* and the Count’s wolves against a backdrop of the U.S. Government’s Indian Wars. White America’s position in *Moon Dance* is fiendishly embodied by the Indian-hating Major James Sanderson, who is given the perfect excuse to go on the offensive when the frozen corpse of a gold prospector is found early in the novel: “Murdered by those rapacious savages....Just as I feared, I’m afraid! Well, we’re going to have to retaliate” (56). Echoing Pauline in Erdrich’s *Tracks*, Sanderson becomes a maniacal mouthpiece for colonialist dogma as he razes a Sioux village and its sacred burial grounds: “What simpletons these savages are! To think their heathen beliefs can shield themselves from our righteous

wrath....Look at this squaw, I have nothing against her. But she can't stop the march of history, can she? Kill her. That's an order" (70). Akin to Erdrich's discrediting of Pauline, though, Somtow does not fail to defend Native American culture: "The Indians' ritual was solemn and dignified; nothing could be further from the bacchanalian screechings and cavortings that were, according to such as Major Sanderson, the only religion of which the Sioux were capable" (26). Somtow also hints at Sanderson's moral deformity by turning him into a physical grotesque: Sanderson survives a scalping during one of his Indian raids and goes through the rest of the narrative with his gnarled head exposed (just as his ugly racist mentality has been exposed).

Moon Dance also works to reclaim native materials to productive ends within a horror narrative by utilizing the half-human, half-animal werewolves in a discourse on hybrid identity and the struggle of the ethnic minority in America "trying to walk the path between two worlds" (248). Teddy Grumiaux, the offspring of a French trainman and an Indian woman, explains the situation of being a "breed": "It means decent civilized folks treat you like a buffler turd, boy. It means you spend your whole life not knowin' who you really is" (179). Teddy's definition resonates for the young werewolf Johnny Kindred, who responds: "I'm one, too....I understand you perfectly." Still, in Somtow's novel hybridity is not an abject concept representing categorical impurity but a condition to be embraced as much as endured. Johnny Kindred is not only a werewolf (a human-animal hybrid); he suffers from a multiple personality disorder, having been traumatized by an event involving his parents which he witnessed as a child (shades of Freud's case study, appropriately, of "The Wolf Man"). While a major plotline in the novel deals with Johnny's efforts to piece together his fragmented psyche, the goal is not to eliminate his werewolf nature. Rather, Johnny needs to accept his role as messiah for the *Shungmanitu* and perform the sacred Moon Dance. Like Tayo in Silko's *Ceremony*, Johnny needs to heal himself before the world can be rescued from witchery and disaster: "The wolf-boy will lead the way. Doors will be opened. The world can yet be redeemed. We can live with the beast within....Or else there will be war, destruction, death, apocalypse" (423).

Finally, one senses Somtow's emergent themes and perhaps metafictional commentary on the horror genre's appropriations when the white character Cordwainer Claggart perverts Johnny's *Shungmanitu* heritage and commodifies it as popular entertainment (hardly a sacred Moon Dance). A pederast and prostitute-killer who pairs with Major Sanderson as the novel's leading human "monsters in their own right" (51), the con man Claggart deviously exploits the *Shungmanitu* for personal financial gain. He ritually slaughters Johnny's *Shungmanitu* mentor in order to lure and trap the wolf-messiah and place him as the star attraction in a traveling Wild West show. Somtow thus offers a critique of the white fascination with the Indian as "curious artifact" (Allen 386), as opposed to the way a horror novel like

Gray's *The Trickster* feeds into such fascination. One Somtow character who emigrates to America is forced to abandon her prejudices and recognize "the Indians as something other than an abstraction. Oh, the Indians along the trip had been picturesque enough, but she had always had the feeling that they existed merely to lend their journey a festive note" (Somtow 238). Even the once-great Sioux chief Sitting Bull makes an appearance in the novel, lamenting that he has been forced to become a blanket Indian in Buffalo Bill's sideshow, "a creature in a circus, an entertainment" (346). Claggart himself has cleverly seized upon Buffalo Bill's ideas and methods, posting handbills advertising "CLAGGERT'S AMAZING CIRCUS OF TRANSFORMATIONS!" and promising a boy that will "TRANSFORM HIMSELF INTO A WOLF!" (426).

To express his incredulity towards such a conversion, a jaded denizen of Rock Springs defaces this handbill with the bloody scrawl: "And watch a Chinaman turn Christian!" This is no insignificant moment of rhetorical violence; Somtow's narrative strategies critique not only the extermination of the Native American but the concomitant discrimination against Chinese railroad laborers.¹⁶ As one Native American reminds another white character in the novel: "Yellow, red, black, brown, you people oppressed the lot of us" (307). Somtow exposes the strategies of comparative racism, which simultaneously lump minorities together under the category of Other while pitting individual minorities against one another in ratios of debasement. For instance, a Rock Springs saloon in *Moon Dance* sports the sign "No dogs, Indian or Chinamen" (140) and patrons who mouth sentiments like "Even them niggers ain't heathens" (428). When the hostilities in Rock Springs break out into a mass lynching of Chinese, Claggart's circus not only proves the perfect entertainment for the bloodthirsty crowd but also compounds the dehumanizing comparisons. Claggart says of the defiled corpse of a hanged Chinese man ("His queue had been hacked off and stuffed into his mouth....An opium pipe protruded from his anus") which he uses as bait for Johnny's primal transformation: "Usually I uses [sic] a wild animal....But when the most wildest animal of all the world is so readily available, I reckon I couldn't help but avail myself of it!" (446). Somtow's most compelling use of the Asian theme, though, is found at the end of the novel when he forges a productive link with Native Americans (even as he extends his sociopolitical focus to Southeast Asia). After Johnny Kindred dies having finally performed the Moon Dance on November 22, 1963, the narrator of the novel's frame story notes the parallel to "another J.K." (533) and wonders if the Moon Dance entails the same deterrent to white culture as a Ghost Dance:

Was Johnny's dance successful? Did his sacrifice bring about what his vision prophesied? Was the world changed? Kennedy died. We lost the war. Does that count as driving the white man into the

sea? Certainly we didn't do to the Vietnamese what we did to the Indians. (534)

The Moon Dance which is posited as a healing alternative to “war, destruction, death, apocalypse” (423) and which is interpreted (in the context of the American war in Vietnam) as short-circuiting the efficacy of militant aggression, ultimately suggests a more hopeful outcome than the “apocalyptic prophecy” (Alexie 185) and vicious cycle of violence threatened by the Ghost Dance in *Indian Killer*. Somtow's novel, though, proves useful not only as the most complete model of emergent horror (a model which third wave/Native American horror writers might emulate). *Moon Dance* should also be offset against a second wave narrative by a white writer who makes the most egregious use of comparative racism. Jack Cady's *By Reason of Darkness* (a novella equal parts *Heart of Darkness* and *Pet Sematary*) reworks Stephen King's plot of two adjacent cemeteries in the woods, offering not a pet cemetery and a Micmac burial ground, but a seemingly tranquil Indian cemetery leading onto a haunting ground of malevolent Chinese spirits.¹⁷ Cady's “black forest” setting on the outskirts of Seattle maps “a land of Chinese ghosts, Indian ghosts, and white fear” (249), but the legend for reading Cady's map is to be found in the rhetorical strategies of comparative racism. The comparisons which are consistently drawn between the Indian and the Chinese achieve a varidirectional denigration of *both* peoples. For example, while the narratorial exposition informs us that “[t]he Orientals arrived [in the Pacific Northwest] as bond slaves. They were excellent workers. Enslaved Indians were not” (263), the Negro character dubbed the Blackbird inverts the ratio of valorization: “There's two graveyards up there. Indian and Chinese. I don't care for either one of 'em. But the Indian one is special” (266). At the same time, the Blackbird claims that the vicious/voracious ghosts from the Chinese cemetery are not all that is to be feared, and that one should not be fooled by the peacefulness of the Indian cemetery: “I know Indians and their ways. They control ravens and crows, and they get fancy on revenge....They control owls and rats and anything that bites” (278-9).

Even as the two cemeteries are divisively pitted against one another in Cady's narrative, they are also dreaded for their interconnection. The Blackbird's cohort, Bjorn North, conflates the spaces of the two cemeteries when he frets: “‘People experimented....Back in the old days. These Indians have got cousins laid out here and up above. There's Chinese Indians, but no Indian Chinese, because’—and he breathed in sobbing snorts, fear-ridden, and finally yelling—‘because there wasn't no Chinese *women*’” (279). Similarly, even as the Blackbird himself speaks ominously of the Indian and Chinese cemeteries, his location in a hotel restaurant sets the stage for a symbolic movement in the background: “An Indian waitress and a Chinese waiter made silent crossing patterns around the tables” (266). The manifest uneasiness

with cultural interweaving thus betrays the hypocrisy of Cady's narrative, which itself performs cross-breeding on a rhetorical level through its strategies of comparative racism. It is also important to note the cunning transferral of blame, as the Native American and the Chinese immigrant are grouped as culprits rather than victims of cultural transgression in a novella ostensibly dealing with America's own disregard for territorial boundaries and disruption of non-white cultures.¹⁸

Aside from its comparative racism which doubles the frisson by demonizing both Native Americans and Asian Americans, *By Reason of Darkness* proves the most forceful of second wave narratives in its deviating (and ultimately devious) use of horror's hoary burial ground trope. At first, Cady's novella seems to uphold the paradigm: the violation of the sacrosanct space of the burial ground—the disruption of property rites—yokes onto larger issues of disregarded property *rights* (with the veterans' violent foray into the two cemeteries reflecting the "state of war" [280] in Southeast Asia). There even seems to be a recognition that the contested soil of America itself represents a mass grave site: when the spirit fences have been torn down and the boundaries of the Chinese cemetery have been erased, the narrator nevertheless wonders, "[W]as I standing on a grave?" (281). But Cady's horror narrative is not symptomatic of a national guilt over America's genocidal mistreatment of native peoples; nor is it really concerned (as Carol Clover noted earlier of the horror genre) with the dispossessed dead. What ultimately haunts *By Reason of Darkness* is not the disgruntled ghosts of a native culture transplanted by American manifest destiny but the realization that the opposition has been insufficiently oppressed (buried?) and has instead taken root in the cultural landscape. The very first line of Cady's novella places the emphasis on a dreaded (from the hegemonic perspective) vitality and sustenance: "Now the corpses are decayed, not into dust, but have become one with the fertile and well-watered soil of the valleys" (245).¹⁹

The narrator's commentary as he passes by San Francisco's Chinatown on his way to Seattle and the haunted cemeteries also betrays that the real concern is being devoured by an unvanquished Asian culture rather than by spiteful Chinese spirits: "Opium. Sweatshops. Money. Smuggling of every commodity, especially illegal immigrant Chinese. We fight war after war in the Orient. The Orient always wins. It absorbs, takes us over; we disappear into its enormous yawn" (248). The Chinese ghosts themselves sound a lot like the narrator's description of Chinatown: "The voices were like the babel of a public market, or like the disjointed buzz and bustle of a crowded street" (282). For all its supernatural trappings about ghostly possession, then, Cady's narrative seems preoccupied with real-world cultural contamination: from the American soldiers who "become Asiatic" (255) as a result of their wartime experiences, to the Negro character Albert Bird, who despite all his talk about Indian-controlled crows and ravens himself affects the nickname

"Blackbird," wears black feathers in his hair, and is seen "[dis]playing Indian tricks" (288) of equestrian skill. Yet ultimately it is Cady's own narrative which performs the greatest trick. Bjorn North's statement "I'm afraid there's no safe place to die" (246) is duplicitous not just because North is attempting to lure his two friends to the cemeteries where he can then murder and offer them as appeasing/atoning sacrifices to the spirit of the place. Demonstrating the insidious cultural work that can be performed by the modern horror genre, Cady's rhetoric suggests the actual fear is that the white man in America now has no safe place *to live*.

Starkly contrasting with Cady's strategies is Louise Erdrich's assertion that Native American writers, "in the light of enormous loss, must tell the stories of contemporary survivors, while protecting and celebrating the cores of cultures left in the wake of enormous catastrophe" (qtd. in Smith 72).²⁰ It also proves worthwhile to return one last time to Erdrich's novel *Tracks* for a sense of the alternative relationship formed with Cady's two main source texts (Erdrich's engagement with, and divergence from, King's *Pet Semetary* has already been noted). From title to plot to (arboreal) setting to its narrator's Orientalist attitudes towards the so-called primitive, Cady's *By Reason of Darkness* makes ample allusion to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.²¹ While Erdrich is no more allusive to Conrad than Cady is, she chooses to seize not upon the darkness but upon the postcolonial perspective in Conrad's narrative. Both Erdrich and Conrad's narratives include rapacious yet anonymous "Agents" trading respectively in Chippewa property and African ivory. The Company in *Heart of Darkness* houses a "large, shining map, marked with all the colors of the rainbow" (13), and in *Tracks* one also finds a multi-colored map (detailing the precarious status of Chippewa allotments following the divide-and-conquer policy of the Dawes Act). Finally, while the Belgian despoiling of the Congo treated by Conrad was a historical enterprise overseen by King Leopold II, Erdrich has the nun Pauline adopt an appropriate name when becoming an agent to the suppression of Chippewa culture: Leopolda.

Erdrich's use of Conrad not only proves integral to the strategies of emergence in *Tracks* but can point towards a model for the continued emergence of Native American Gothic. The contradictions of Conrad's Kurtz, who presents himself to Marlowe's imagination "as a voice" (48) yet presides over "unspeakable rites" (50) in Africa, perhaps foreshadows the modern horror genre gone native in its appropriation of Native American mythology and the desire to simultaneously silence and demonize (recall Kurtz's own conclusion in his report on the Suppression of Savage Customs: "Exterminate all the brutes!" [51]). Refusing, though, to let Native American myths and customs be darkened into "unspeakable rites," a writer like Erdrich reclaims the right to narrate their cultural significance. Like Conrad's colonial Africa (and hopefully, as the intertextual matrix constructed by the preceding essay has

helped demonstrate), the meaning and value of such Native American “property”—and the propriety of its usage—is still up for grabs. By recognizing horror as a potentially subversive rhetoric to be employed in the dialogue with dominant culture, Native American writers might follow Erdrich’s tracks (and her *Tracks*)—staking a claim against continued dispossession and driving a stake through the “heart of darkness” used to enshroud Native American culture. By seeking to expose the ideologies of appropriation and abjection, such writers might take the vague yet frantic Kurtzian cries of “The horror!” and respond with the critical interrogation, “The horror?”

Notes

¹ To acknowledge such a formula is not to equate or homogenize the abjection of various minority peoples. For instance, when Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* suggests that “the proper subject for American Gothic is the black man” (397) and traces out a tradition extending from Poe’s *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym of Nantucket* to Melville’s *Benito Cereno* to Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*, he links such Gothicism to a particular set of anxieties expressed by the dominant culture (slave rebellion, miscegenation). Such anxieties do not necessarily (or fully) translate to the depiction of the Native American, whose recurring role in horror narratives speaks other white fears and prejudices.

² In his introduction to *Edgar Huntly*, Norman S. Grabo notes the significance of Brown’s setting his novel outside Philadelphia in the year 1787: the symbolic founding of a new nation via the Constitutional Convention overwrites the attempted eradication of Native American society within the novel (what Grabo [xiv] calls the “national nightmare of dispossession”). Cf. the Gothic rhetoric of another purported document of American history, William Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which attributes to “the savage people” various “cruelties horrible to be related” (169) and establishes the Indian as a barbarous obstacle blocking the march of civilization.

³ The tendentious approach of merely castigating the horror genre for displaying a racist/imperialist bent (or conversely, of naively championing those narratives which offer more positive depictions of Native Americans) might be avoided through closer scrutiny: even those horror narratives (by either white or native authors) which on the surface seem to make all the right maneuvers/statements can be seen to gloss over conflicting, underlying ideologies.

It should also be noted that I deliberately choose the term “wave” for its sense of a fluid, overlapping dynamic, as opposed to the rigid, strict chronological sequencing suggested by a historical “period.” Rather than attempt a sweeping survey of the evolution of the Native American in the horror narrative, I hope to dialogize these second and third waves which form a roughly *contemporaneous* moment in American literary history.

⁴ The paternalistic rhetoric of William Gilmore Simms’ 1846 *Views and Reviews*, his call for white American writers to civilize their Indian materials, foreshadows the

opportunistic (and perhaps hypocritical) appropriations of the modern horror genre. Simms writes: "Their [ie. Native Americans'] dark and gloomy mythologies...will receive some softening lights, some subduing touches, from the all-endowing spells of [white literary] genius" (qtd. in Goddu 72).

⁵ The concept of "emergent ethnic literature" is itself rooted in Raymond Williams' notion of "emergence" in *Marxism and Literature*: "By emergent, I mean, first, that new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship are continually being created" (123). Williams' understanding of hegemonic authority as a cultural process, as a constant tug-of-war between dominant and emergent culture, also seems a useful paradigm for the contestation of Native American mythology which I am attempting to trace.

⁶ Edward W. Said acutely interconnects issues of narrative property with those of land ownership: "The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves *are* narrations. The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (xii-xiii).

⁷ In *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature*, Jeanne Rosier Smith finds writers like Kingston, Morrison, and Erdrich engaged in a project of "revisionist mythmaking" which does not just attempt to retell traditional myths but to reinvent and recombine them: "As they draw on Chinese legend, Chippewa myth, and African American folktale, they not only question gender roles but also revise traditional myths both of their ancestral backgrounds and of the dominant culture, to suit the needs of life in modern America" (5).

⁸ Magistrale is on the mark when he links the protagonist of *Pet Semetary* to Hawthorne's host of unpardonable sinners, from Aylmer to Rapaccini to Chillingworth. I would also note that the ominous refrain running throughout *Pet Semetary*—"the soil of a man's heart is stonier" (59)—calls to mind Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand," whose dark heart transmutes into marble at tale's end.

⁹ *Pet Semetary* does offer a minor character who is a countryman of India, but like most things "Indian" in the novel, he is degraded by white culture. Dr. Surrendra ["surrender?"] Hardu's role consists of brunting his co-workers' racist jokes and being vomited on by a patient.

¹⁰ One might recall *Edgar Huntly* and Brown's professed desire to depict "incidents of Indian hostility." The horrors of that novel are chalked up to vengeful Indians making "groundless and absurd [property] claims" (270). Brown's title character ties up loose ends by noting how the old Indian woman who resisted the white usurpation of tribal land is brought to justice by white authority: "Queen Mab, three days after my adventure, was seized in her hut on suspicion of having aided and counselled her countrymen, in their late depredations" (270).

¹¹ Clover here might be guilty of some wishful-viewing, as the climactic corpses of *Poltergeist* seem generic ghouls rather than conspicuously Native American. Perhaps what is most interesting about *Poltergeist* (as in King's *Pet Semetary*) is its reluctance to fully acknowledge the bloody history it reflects. Consider the disavowal

made in *Poltergeist* by the real-estate mogul regarding the displaced cemetery: "It's not ancient tribal burial grounds; it's just people."

¹² A prime example can be found in Catherine Montrose's horror novel *The Wendigo Border* (1995), where "the madness of Wounded Knee" (180) is blamed not on white militancy but on a Native American character who has allowed a group of demonic wendigo to run amok. Here the appropriation of native mythology by a second wave horror narrative seems but another belated justification of American aggression and atrocity.

¹³ In his psychoanalysis of the American conquest of the Indian, historian Michael Paul Rogin asserts: "Whites perceived Indians...as children in a sustaining, oral relationship to nature. Since that relationship was a projection of forbidden white longings, it could not be permitted to remain a cultural alternative" (292). Thus one can understand how the horror genre might recast such orality in a negative light. Not only does King's Wendigo connote heathen cannibalism; it is characterized by its hellish "rictus": "The lower lip was turned inside out, revealing teeth stained blackish-brown and worn down almost to the nubs" (King, *Pet Semetary* 327).

¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Stephen King has offered the reverse perspective. In *Danse Macabre*, King's non-fiction study of the horror genre, he espouses the conservative politics of subversion and containment: "Monstrosity fascinates us because it appeals to the conservative Republican in a three-piece suit which resides in all of us. We love and need the concept of monstrosity because it is a reaffirmation of the order we all crave as human beings....After all, when we discuss monstrosity, we are expressing our faith and belief in the norm and watching for the mutant. The writer of horror fiction is nothing more nor less than an agent of the status quo" (50-1).

¹⁵ Perhaps *Crota* should be lamented for its missed opportunities rather than laureled as a third wave horror novel. The name of Goingback's fictional Missouri town, Logan, echoes the title of a founding American Gothic novel thematizing Indian removal and massacre, John Neal's 1822 *Logan: A Family History* (to which Teresa A. Goddu devotes an entire chapter in her study, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation*). Goingback, though, fails to develop this inter-textual allusion into a critique of Neal's appropriation of "native materials" (Goddu 53).

¹⁶ Again, my intent is not to blur Gothic figurations of various minority peoples. Historically, horror's treatment of the Asian has tended towards an Orientalist gaze, one compounded of desire and dread and projected onto an Eastern landscape conceived as at once illustrious and illicit, splendid and squalid (e.g., Dan Simmons' "Dying in Bangkok," Peter Straub's *Koko*). I introduce the Asian theme here only to broach the issue of comparative racism and its contrasting appearance in third wave versus second wave horror narratives.

¹⁷ King himself in *Pet Semetary* displays a penchant for comparative racism, suddenly announcing that the demonic Wendigo has eyes "like the eyes in a classical Chinese painting" (327). One might also note that *By Reason of Darkness*'s analogue with *Pet Semetary* surreptitiously links Cady's Indian cemetery with King's site of animal burial (appropriately, a critically-wounded horse is buried in the Indian cemetery at the end of Cady's novella).

¹⁸ A bit of plot summary seems in order here: *By Reason of Darkness* involves a trio of veterans—the Blackbird, Bjorn North, and an anonymous narrator—haunted

by the atrocities they helped perpetrate as part of an invading American military in a war (unspecified by Cady) in Southeast Asia. This includes not only the typical murderous mayhem (shades here of Francis Ford Coppola's own update of *Heart of Darkness* in the Vietnam war film *Apocalypse Now*) but a rocketing of a sacred Asian graveyard and the destruction of its "spirit fences": "The small fences contained the spirits of the dead and kept away the other hungry spirits that flew across the world howling and weeping in their relentless and hopelessly eternal quests" (257-8). North notes the eerie similarity after the war when a Satanic cult pillages the Chinese cemetery in Washington state. As this second set of spirit fences are destroyed, and as the angered Chinese ghosts awaken, North fears that they will seek retribution for his own wartime misdeeds (which include the cold-blooded murder of a pacifist Asian monk).

¹⁹ Teresa Goddu surveys the rhetoric from both cultural and imperial spheres—from Philip Freneau's 1788 poem "The Indian Burying Ground" to Andrew Johnson's 1830 Second Address to Congress—which has constructed a myth of the vanishing American "to naturalize the Indian's disappearance from the American landscape" (56). Cady, though, mutates such "naturalization," such association of the Indian with the grave/the buried past, into an unsettling outgrowth.

²⁰ When Fleur is displaced from her sacred ancestral lands by the lumber company at the conclusion of *Tracks*, she carries her family's grave markers with her on her wagon and sets off towards white civilization. Fleur, though, represents neither the vengeful (despite her last name, "Pillager") nor the vanishing Native American (e.g. she resurfaces in the Erdrich novel *Love Medicine* as a midwife). Stressing notions of survival and rebirth, critic Jeanne Rosier Smith also notes that "Fleur is indeed the 'funnel' of tribal history; the one daughter [Lulu] she produces goes on in *Love Medicine* to repopulate the tribe and take her place as a community matriarch" (96).

²¹ The phrase "heart of darkness" itself seems ubiquitous in horror circles, no doubt signaling Conrad's novella to be one of the genre's revered precursor texts. In a headnote to *By Reason of Darkness*, editor Douglas E. Winter actually invokes Conrad as "Cady's spiritual ancestor" (244).

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